MTC Smart Growth Technical Assistance:
Parking Reform Campaign

June 2012 Smart Parking Workshops: Summary

June 2012

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Introduction

On June 11, 12, and 13, MTC hosted three technical workshops on parking reform. These workshops were aimed at planning and transportation professionals, decision-makers, infill developers, and others interested in new policies, strategies, and communication approaches related to parking and access. These workshops built on an ongoing regional initiative to better examine issues and opportunities around parking policies, especially focusing on reforming parking policies to support transit oriented development, infill development, and vibrant downtowns and town centers, as described on MTC's website:

www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/parking/.

This report summarizes the format, content, key issues covered and potential next steps. Comments and questions raised by participants are included in Attachment A. All presentation materials will be made available on MTC's parking website (URL above). Furthermore, the four educational modules will be condensed into 4 minute presentations, and a 15 minute overview of the entire workshop will be produced.

Workshop Structure

Workshops were held at the following places and times:

- Monday, June 11, 2012: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, San Jose
- Tuesday, June 12, 2012: Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Oakland
- Wednesday, June 13, 2012: Walnut Creek Downtown Library, Walnut Creek

Holding the workshops in three locations throughout the Bay Area allowed participants to choose a location most convenient to them. The structure and content was similar at each.

Material Presented

Following an introduction by Valerie Knepper, transportation planner at MTC spearheading the parking reform campaign, a local elected official provided a welcome and some local context on parking issues in the area. In San Jose, this was Councilmember Sam Liccardo, representing the Downtown district; in Oakland, Tom Bates, mayor of Berkeley, spoke; and in Walnut Creek, Ken Nordhoff, the City Manager for Walnut Creek, spoke.

Modules

Following the introduction, Jeff Tumlin of Nelson\Nygaard presented a series of four modules on key parking issues:

1. **Parking and Smart Growth.** This module provided an overview of why parking is important and how it impacts our communities, including the role of pricing on travel mode choices, how parking policies impact regional development patterns, and how parking affects housing affordability.

2. **Rethinking Parking Minimums.** This presentation gave an overview of how parking minimum requirements came about, impact development patterns, and can be changed to better support community goals for compact development, especially in downtowns and transit station areas. The traditional approach to establishing parking minimums has had a number of unintended consequences of major importance for modern communities. Parking minimums have hidden the cost of parking from users, changed the economics of development toward less urban locations, and given priority for driving over other transportation modes. This has resulted in economically excess land devoted to parking, higher housing prices due to bundled parking costs, and development spread over more land area, making alternative modes less convenient for the public. Reducing or eliminating these minimum requirements can provide developers the opportunity to create housing and commercial developments with lower levels of parking where their assessment indicates local market demand, resulting in more choice for renters, buyers and commercial clients. Many cities have or are considering eliminating or reducing parking minimums, particularly in downtowns zones and close to quality transit, typically to support greater economic development in these areas. Cities were encouraged to consider this approach.

3. **Analyzing Parking Structures.** Parking structures are one of the most conspicuous "solutions" to a community's parking challenges, and they can be key to the success of many transit oriented developments, successful downtowns, and transit station access. However, parking structures are also expensive to build, are often underutilized, expensive to operate, serve auto access potentially at the expense of other modes, and tie up land that might have more valuable uses. An analytical technique was demonstrated showing the difference between the theoretical and on-the-ground accessibility by walking and biking, leading to consideration of the ability to improve access by cost effective investments in these modes. This module provided a multi-modal context, an overview of the benefits, key issues, challenges and tradeoffs associated with parking structures, and a framework for critical thinking about parking structures.

4. **Parking Management from a System Perspective**. This presentation provided an overview of parking management and various approaches, such as pricing, unbundling of parking from housing and other development, shared parking, and parking benefit districts, which can and should be used in conjunction with the reductions/elimination of minimum parking requirements discussed earlier. Transportation demand management (TDM) is a general term for strategies that increase overall transportation system efficiency by encouraging a shift from single-occupant vehicle trips to other modes or out of peak travel periods. Parking Demand Management (PDM) applies a TDM-type perspective to parking issues, using these strategies along with reformed parking policies to achieve community goals.

Following each module, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and share comments and experiences on each of the topics. A summary of key questions and comments is presented in Attachment A.

Keynote Speakers

The second half of the workshops featured two keynote speaker presentations, one representing the public sector perspective on parking management and the second representing the private sector/developer perspective.

Matt Taecker, principal at Dyett & Bhatia, presented the public sector perspective at all three workshops. Prior to joining Dyett & Bhatia in January 2012, Mr. Taecker worked for five years as the principal planner for the City of Berkeley on the Downtown Area Plan, which included comprehensive parking reform policies and zoning, including establishment of a parking/transportation demand management program (PTDM). The presentation focused on parking management strategies that the City chose to incorporate into the plan and the process of working with the community and stakeholders on the implementation of the parking program.

Mott Smith, principal at Civic Enterprise, an infill development company based in Los Angeles, presented the private sector perspective at the San Jose and Oakland workshops. Mr. Smith's presentation focused on describing the decision-making process that developers go through in designing and proposing projects, and the negative effects that minimum parking standards have on these projects' design, feasibility, and length of entitlement process, as well as the ultimate affordability of the residential product being developed. His presentation emphasized the challenges of developing on small infill parcels with parking requirements that are unnecessarily high and/or inflexible. He noted that developers perform their own analysis of local conditions and would not choose to build housing with too little parking to produce sales or rents in the local market. He also noted that reduced parking standards cannot be used by cities as a bargaining tool for developers, since lower levels of parking result in lower sales/rental prices, but provide a public benefit because they allow for development of more market-based lower cost units. He closed by noting his strong support for AB 904: The Sustainable Parking Standards Act of 2012 as a measure for public benefit.

Robert Swierk, Robert Swierk, Senior Transportation Planner, and Justin Meek, Adjunct Lecturer at San José State University, presented an overview of the 2010 SJSU/VTA collaborative research project of parking at transit-oriented development (TOD) residential projects at the Walnut Creek workshop. This effort collected parking utilization rates at 12 housing developments near VTA light rail and Caltrain stations. The analysis found that the parking supply exceeded utilization for each one of these projects, ranging from 14 percent to 39 percent oversupply, even though the parking requirements had already been reduced from standard city rates. They estimated the cost of this oversupply of parking at almost $35 million in capital costs and an additional $2 million per year in maintenance, in addition to land costs that were not analyzed. In corroborating recent research which demonstrated that other TOD residential properties in the Bay Area are also "over-parked" (Cervero 2009), the study provides useful evidence to help inform decision makers that less parking can and ought to be required for housing projects that are located near rail transit service. Robert Swierk closed by providing observations on a recent example where the City of Mountain View used this analysis as a

background combined with city-level data to support reductions in parking requirements for pipeline high-density residential projects.

Next Steps

MTC will distribute an online survey to workshop participants to get feedback on the workshops, the situation in cities considering parking reform, and interest in next steps for MTC's smart parking campaign. All workshop materials and technical papers produced as part of this effort will be made available on MTC's website. In addition, there will be four minute narrated summaries of the four "modules" and a 15 minute condensed overview of the workshops. These may be used as tools by city staff and others wishing to engage in discussions about why reforming parking policies and multi-modal analysis of parking structures makes sense.

Attachment A: Comments and Feedback

The following presents a summary of the questions and comments from participants (at all three workshops combined) on each topic; not all comments or responses can be included in this summary due to space constraints. When time allowed at the end of the workshops, participants were also asked to provide feedback to MTC on what else the parking campaign could provide that would help local jurisdictions reform their parking policies. As a follow up, MTC will be sending an online survey to each workshop participant asking them to evaluate the workshops, provide feedback on interest and progress in parking reform, and solicit useful next steps.

Module 1: Parking and Smart Growth

- What is the relationship between LOS standards, roadway construction, and parking provision? If we're building our roads to a certain capacity, shouldn't parking be tied to that?
    - Managing parking is an excellent way to manage congestion. Especially in downtown areas, there is substantial evidence that a large portion of traffic congestion is due to people cruising for parking. [Prof. Don Shoup's work delves into this subject, and it is being analyzed in the SFPark project; Matt Taecker's presentation also presents some data for Berkeley on this topic.]
- Controlling parking supply is essentially the only tool that local jurisdictions have to manage congestion.
- It seems as though cities would have to have a real-time method for managing supply and demand for parking, because of changes in behavior at different times of the day.
- How can you say that young people don't want to drive when the local high school has a completely full parking lot?
    - The trend of lower auto ownership and car usage by young people is found nationally and locally, in several studies. Of course there is local and personal variation.
- Regarding declining car use among younger people, is this a cost consideration or personal preference?
    - Driving continues to be cheap so it really has to do with lifestyle. Of course there is variation in preferences among young people, but interest in living without a car is a significant trend.
- How would you describe the needs of older adults? Don't they generally need parking because of mobility concerns?

- o Some older adults certainly do need parking but also note that many also want to be able to walk as walking can allow them to live independently longer and walking is generally healthy.
- If you're saying that the market should decide on parking provision, why have any zoning at all?
  - o Zoning has a role, but its impact should be carefully examined. Many parking policies, standards and related regulations in zoning ordinances are outdated and not supporting current community or regional goals.
- If you eliminate on-site parking, doesn't that push the problem onto the street/the public?
  - o Module four, parking management, discusses the relationship between on-street and off-street parking, and the importance of having a comprehensive management strategy to address exactly that problem.
- How should you handle parking requirements in a TOD that is just emerging? Here, eventually you'll have the transit to support less parking on site, but not immediately. What should be done?
  - o Lowered provision of parking can be "phased in" once the TOD area is more established. One solution is to "front-load" the construction of parking—for example, construct a shared lot or structure—to attract businesses that can then share the parking and provide less new parking on their own sites.

Module 2: Parking Minimums

- How do you actually find the right number for standards? The process is important, including considering a wider range of needs and travel modes.
  - o It needs to start with data gathering—a good inventory of what you have and how it is used. The problem often comes when we apply standards from elsewhere that have no real relevance to our communities.
- Do parking consultants also rely on these old standards? If we are hiring consultants to help with this, we need to know who can think beyond these older requirements.
  - o There are consultants who understand how to reform your parking policies to support the goals of more infill development and livable communities. MTC staff would be happy to provide contact info for some good consultants for this type of work.
- A key challenge in downtown areas trying to update standards is lot size.
- Cities should start in the places where reducing parking requirements makes the most sense – commercial districts.
- We have found that developers want to build at greater than our parking standards. [Comment later clarified: developers wanted to build more parking than was limited by parking *maximums*, not minimums.]

- Another player is the banks/lenders. Don't they look for a certain amount of parking before they will finance a project? [Mott Smith speaks to this in his presentation.]

- What evidence do you have about not needing so many parking spaces? Is this backed up by data?
    - There are a number of studies that have found this situation, references are found at MTC's website under planning/parking.

- Regarding unbundling, why not frame it as a "discount" for having the parking space separated from the unit, as opposed to an "additional cost" to have the space? It would accomplish the same thing, but might appeal more psychologically.

- Do you have any experience with municipalities owning parking areas around TODs and charging people who drive to the area?
    - There are examples of businesses that have pooled resources to create parking districts and parking shuttles.

- In Oakland, we are in the process of updating parking requirements. What should we be surveying and looking at?
    - Prices and availability by time of day
    - Other access modes that are close by
    - Impacts on retail sales

- In more suburban areas, is reducing parking minimums still appropriate?
    - Again, not a one-size-fits-all solution. It can still be appropriate to reduce minimums, but collect your own data on utilization and find a rate that is right for the community. Remember that reducing requirements does not necessarily reduce the amount of parking – it just opens up that opportunity if developers see a market.

- In Alameda County/International Boulevard, there were maximum parking requirements that business owners wished to be removed.
    - Maximums are used to promote community goals where too much parking might get in the way of pedestrian connectivity, affordable housing, or supporting existing businesses. It is important to use them carefully and monitor the results to avoid over dampening the local development market.

- What do you do when the standards call for a lot of parking, and developers also want to provide it?
    - That might be fine. If your community is concerned with walkability, you may want to require or create incentives for shared parking, and require good design (for example, limit its location to behind buildings or in garage parking above or below shops). You can also use parking maximums and where developers want to build more, collect a fee that could go into a parking benefits district.

Module 3: Parking Structures

- Have you considered Park & Ride facilities? Are there any metrics regarding what amount of public subsidy is appropriate for this type of parking use?
    - Same kind of utilization data gathering and studies can be done for park and ride. This is an important component of transit ridership, but as we've been discussing, it needs to be balanced with other uses that are desirable in close proximity to transit.
- Instead of parking structures, are there examples of retailers who have pooled money to support shuttles that take people into shopping districts?
- It is mentioned that people like street parking the most. Regarding garages, do people prefer subterranean or above ground?
    - Generally people like subterranean the least. Whether people like parking in a garage is influenced by how well lighted it is and the design.

Module 4: Parking Management

- There must be companies that do this sort of whole-system analysis. Can you provide names of who can help?
    - MTC can provide a list.
- Do retailers ever unbundle parking, or just residential?
    - Yes they do, in dense downtowns – people are not surprised to pay for parking in downtown San Francisco and other large cities. Charging for parking for retail is the "last frontier," and while it is practiced in some places with high demand, it is much less common and requires careful management.
- What about disabled parking and electric vehicle parking?
    - You can take the same approach to providing disabled parking as other parking—it doesn't need to be provided on every site, but it should be convenient and accessible to multiple destinations. Consider looking at disabled parking at the block face scale. It is important to work with the disabled community to understand their needs.
- Are there any cities that charge for parking after 6pm?
- It is so important to couple reduce parking requirements with sufficient transit. But these days, who is going to pay for more transit?
- If you charge for parking, won't people just shop in the city next door where parking is free?
    - Remember that parking management is not just about charging money but about improving all aspects of your urban environment: improving walkability and the overall public realm, improving convenience and ease of finding a

space, fostering use of other modes of transportation. These all also contribute to a healthy retail district.

- People use cars to transport themselves and transport "stuff." Have lockers or other things been included in the parking "arsenal"?

  o Many larger department stores get this and do offer to let you leave what you've just bought but it hasn't been done as a municipal service. A concierge service to help shoppers in urban areas can important. Child care can offer similar convenience, so you don't need to take them everywhere you shop.

- In Albany, where charging for parking is unpopular, is there another way to go about things without charging for parking?

  o Time controls can work to get employees to park farther away and if there is no scarcity after doing this or other strategies, that is fine. If a district gets to be successful, however, there will be competition for on-street spaces and you'll eventually need to have the conversation about pricing. It may take an intensive community process for people to understand this and come up with appropriate strategies for a given place.

- Can you discuss the tension between increasing the price of parking and wanting to maintain access for lower-income households as a social equity goal?

  o You can target those populations with vouchers. But also understand that free parking is subsidized, and everyone is being taxed to support people who drive a lot. Think about how the subsidy parking could be shifted to more effectively address social equity objectives, such as giving low-income households transit passes.

What More Can MTC Do?

- More community outreach materials
- Videos like "Streetfilms"
- Discussions with developers/financiers
- Funding for parking inventories/utilization studies
- Information on new technology
- Provide studies or funding for studies for parking utilization to combat conventional perceptions of parking problems
- A public campaign like "spare the air," with focused attention to smart growth issues